

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11

HA-05 IO-13 AID-05 COME-00 EB-08 FRB-03 TRSE-00

XMB-02 OPIC-03 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 CEA-01 STR-07

/121 W

-----063819 102119Z /45

R 101641Z MAY 78

FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6545

INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

USCINCSO QUARRY HTS CZ

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MANAGUA 2163

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, SHUM, NU, VE

SUBJECT: AMB CONVERSATION WITH SOMOZA: MAY 8

REF: A) MANAGUA 1945, B) STATE 115257, C) MANAGUA 1976,

D) MANAGUA 2085, E) STATE 115453, F) STATE 116683

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE AMB MET WITH SOMOZA FOR OVER ONE HOUR ON MAY 8 TO DISCUSS THE PRESENCE OF AMCITS CONTRACTED BY THE NATIONAL GUARD (GN) AND TO RESPOND TO SOMOZA'S REQUEST FOR AN EXPLANATION OF USG POLICY TOWARD NICARAGUA THROUGH THE IFI'S. ADDITIONALLY, THEY DISCUSSED SOMOZA'S POLICIES IN THE FACE OF CONTINUING DIFFICULTIES FOR A POLITICAL ACCOMMODATION AND RESUMPTION OF THE NATIONAL DIALOG. THE AMB CONGRATULATED SOMOZA ON THE RECENT VISIT OF THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND THEY DISCUSSED THE IAHC. END SUMMARY.

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1. AS INSTRUCTED IN REF EA, THE AMB CONGRATULATED SOMOZA ON THE VISIT OF THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS TO NICARAGUA AND THE REPORTED IMPROVEMENT IN THE CONDITIONS IN WHICH SOME POLITICAL PRISONERS ARE IMPRISONED. THE AMB THEN DETAILED USG POLICY REGARDING IFI'S AND USAID AS INDICATED IN REF B, STRESSING THE ABSENCE OF ANY INDICATION OF AN "ECONOMIC BOYCOTT" DIRECTED AGAINST THE GON.

2. SOMOZA AGREED THAT THERE WAS NO "TOTAL" BOYCOTT. HE SAID THAT HE FELT RELATIONS WERE IMPROVING BETWEEN THE USG AND THE GON. SOMOZA SAID THAT IT WAS VERY IMPORTANT FOR THE USG TO SUPPORT HIM. THE USG, HE SAID, CANNOT CONTINUE TO PLAY "THIS COWARDLY GAME." THE USG HAS MADE ITS POINT ON HUMAN RIGHTS, SAID SOMOZA, AND NOW IT WAS TIME TO "MEND (OUR) FENCES" WITH LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES. SOMOZA WENT ON TO CATEGORIZE AS "SHAMEFUL" THE REJECTION BY THE PRESIDENT OF BRAZIL OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S INVITATION TO VISIT THE UNITED STATES. THIS, HE SAID, WAS A CONSEQUENCE OF THE "DISTASTEFUL" POLICY OF THE USG, MOVED BY THE "EXCESSIVE IDEALISM" OF PRESIDENT CARTER. THE USG, SOMOZA SAID, IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DISORDERS IN NICARAGUA AND FOR THE FORTY MEMBERS OF THE GN WHO DIED DURING THEM.

3. THE AMB REPLIED THAT SUCH AN ANALYSIS WAS UNACCEPTABLE. HE REMINDED SOMOZA THAT THE LIFTING OF A STATE OF SIEGE HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN ACCOMPANIED BY DISTURBANCES. CLEARLY, HE CONTINUED, THE USG HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH CHAMORRO'S ASSASSINATION NOR WITH THE DETERIORATION OF SOMOZA'S HEALTH - FACTORS WHICH ENCOURAGED THE OUTBREAK OF MASSIVE PROTESTS AGAINST THE GON. SOMOZA AGREED WITH AMB'S INTERPRETATION THAT DISTURBANCES WERE CAUSED BY MULTIPLE FACTORS.

4. THE AMB THEN PRESENTED THE POINTS RAISED IN REF E
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CONCERNING THE AMCITS ON CONTRACT TO THE GN. SOMOZA'S INITIAL RESPONSE WAS TO BRUSH OFF THE MATTER AS A "TEMPEST IN A TEAPOT." THE AMB FIRMLY STATED USG DISTRESS OVER THE SITUATION, ESPECIALLY IN LIGHT OF ALLEGATIONS THAT THE AMCITS WERE CIA OPERATIVES. SUCH ALLEGATIONS WERE BEING MADE BY THE AMCITS THEMSELVES BOTH WITHIN NICARAGUA AND THE UNITED STATES. SOMOZA CLAIMED THAT THE AMCITS WERE SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE AND HENCE INCLINED TO "UNUSUAL" BEHAVIOR. BUT HE EVENTUALLY ACCEPTED THE POTENTIAL FOR FRICTION BETWEEN THE USG AND THE GON THAT THE AMB HAD MENTIONED AND THE USG'S CONCERN ABOUT THE MATTER. HE STATED THAT THE FOLLOWING DAY HE WOULD CALL THE AMCITS TO HIS OFFICE AND WOULD PREVENT FUTURE "OPERATIONAL INCIDENTS." THE AMB SAID THAT THE SANDINISTAS WERE AWARE OF THE AMCITS' PRESENCE AND HAD MENTIONED THIS FACT IN THEIR PUBLICATIONS. SOMOZA AGREED TO CONTROL THE PROBLEM. THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT, AS FAR AS HE KNEW, THERE WERE ONLY TWO AMCITS INVOLVED. THEY HAD 6-12 MONTH CONTRACTS AND HAD BEEN "HIRED LOCALLY." SOMOZA FURTHER INDICATED TO THE AMB THAT NO PLANS EXISTED FOR CROSS-BORDER OPERATIONS INTO COSTA RICA.

5. SOMOZA AGAIN INSISTED THAT THE USG MAKE PUBLIC

DECLARATIONS OF SUPPORT FOR THE GON. THE AMB REQUESTED THAT THE GON HANDLE ANNOUNCEMENTS OF NEW LOANS ROUTINELY, THAT NO DISPROPORTIONATE PUBLICITY ATTEND THESE ANNOUNCEMENTS. THE AMB WENT ON TO STATE THAT ANY WRONG IMPRESSIONS GAINED FROM SUCH PUBLICITY MIGHT RESULT IN RESENTMENT WHICH WOULD NOT CONTRIBUTE TO STABILITY.

6. SOMOZA SAID THAT HE WAS ENCOURAGED BY PRIVATE MOVES IN THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY TOWARD DIALOG WITH HIM AND STABILIZATION OF THE SITUATION. HE EXPRESSED OPTIMISM THAT VIOLENCE WOULD BE CONTROLLED AND HE WOULD NOT BE OVERTHROWN.

7. THE AMB AGREED THAT THERE WERE INDICATIONS THAT SOME POLITICAL AND BUSINESS GROUPS WERE WILLING TO NEGOTIATE
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NEW RULES OF THE GAME. HE SAID THAT HE HOPED THERE WOULD BE NO RETROGRESSION IN THE PROGRESS THAT HAD OCCURRED IN POLITICAL FREEDOMS AND PARTICIPATION. THE AMB SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THAT THERE HAD BEEN A TENDENCY IN NICARAGUA FOR PRESS CENSORSHIP TO BE FOLLOWED BY IRRESPONSIBLE JOURNALISM, BUT HE HOPED FOR THE ENACTMENT OF A NEW LAW TO PRESERVE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS WHILE MAKING IT MORE RESPONSIBLE. THE AMB SAID THAT ALL PUBLIC SERVANTS REALIZE THAT FREEDOM OF THE PRESS IS A POSITIVE FACTOR. SOMOZA AGREED, BUT NOTED THAT IT WAS VERY HARD IN NICARAGUA TO GET JOURNALISTS TO POLICE THEMSELVES.

8. THE AMB SAID THAT HE HOPED THE GON WOULD MAINTAIN FLEXIBILITY TO CALM THE SITUATION. HE CONGRATULATED SOMOZA ON HIS COPALAR DECISION (REF A). HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT, IN HIS OPINION, A MAJOR STUMBLING BLOCK TO RENEWED DIALOG WAS THAT, AS THE OPPOSITION HAD CALLED FOR SOMOZA'S IMMEDIATE RESIGNATION, 1981 WAS TOO LONG FOR THEM TO WAIT. ANY AGREEMENT TO WAIT THAT LONG WOULD CAUSE THEM TO LOSE FACE.

9. SOMOZA BLAMED THE USG FOR ENCOURAGING STRIKERS TO CALL FOR HIS IMMEDIATE RESIGNATION. HE SAID HE WAS IN A VERY STRONG POSITION: THE ENTIRE GN WAS LOYAL; HE HAD DIVESTED HIMSELF OF HIS UNPROFITABLE BUSINESSES AND ALL OF HIS BUSINESSES WERE FLOURISHING; THE BUDGET WAS BASICALLY BALANCED AND FOREIGN DEBT COULD BE REPAID FROM EXISTING RESERVES. IF BUSINESSMEN CONTINUED, WITH THE USG SUPPORT, TO UNDERMINE CONFIDENCE IN THE ECONOMY, HE COULD FIND HIMSELF IN THE POSITION OF BEING ABLE TO BUY THEIR BUSINESSES.

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XMB-02 OPIC-03 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 CEA-01 STR-07
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R 101651ZMAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6546
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
USCINCSO QUARRY HTS CZ

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT PARA 13 LINE 12)

10. THE AMB REPLIED THAT THE USG RECOGNIZED SOMOZA'S
POLITICAL STRENGTH, BUT ALSO UNDERSTOOD THAT IT WAS ESSENTIAL
THAT HE ACT PATRIOTICALLY TO PRODUCE A DEMOCRATIC, STABLE
NICARAGUA. THE AMB ASKED IF SOMOZA WOULD CONSIDER ADVANCING
THE ELECTIONS TO 1980 AS A COMPROMISE WITH DEMANDS FOR HIS
EARLY RESIGNATION. AFTER SOME HESITATION, SOMOZA REPLIED
THAT HE WAS WILLING TO ADVANCE THE ELECTIONS, BUT THAT UNDER
NO CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD HE STEP DOWN EARLY. THE AMB
THEN ASKED IF, IN VIEW OF SOMOZA'S INCREASED CONFIDENCE,
HE WAS STILL INTERESTED IN DIALOG. SOMOZA'S REPLY WAS
AFFIRMATIVE.

11. SOMOZA ATTRIBUTED NICARAGUA'S PAST STABILITY TO THE
STRENGTH AND COHESIVENESS OF THE LIBERAL PARTY UNDER HIS
LEADERSHIP, COUPLED WITH HIS CONTROL OVER THE GN. HE SOUGHT,
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HE SAID, A POLITICAL UNDERSTANDING WITH THE OPPOSITION NOT
BECAUSE IT WAS STRONG, BUT AS THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE TO PROVIDE
A COHESIVE POLITICAL SYSTEM AFTER HE STEPS DOWN IN 1981.

SOMOZA SAID HE WAS WILLING TO NEGOTATE ELECTORAL REFORM AND NEW REGULATIONS TO INSTITUTIONALIZE THE GN, BUT WOULD NOT AMEND THE CONSTITUTION OR RESIGN BEFORE 1981 TO PLEASE AN "ELECTORAL MINORITY." HE CONTINUED TO STRESS THAT HIS LIBERAL PARTY IS THE MAJORITY.

12. IN A DISCUSSION OF THE IAHRG, THE AMB SAID HE THOUGHT THE GON COULD "MAKE POINTS" BY EXTENDING AN INVITATION AT THE RISK OF A FEW DISTURBANCES DURING THE VISIT. SOMOZA SAID HE RECOGNIZED THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS BUT DIDN'T WANT TO "PLEASE" CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ BY AGREEING TO A VISIT UNDER DURESS.

13. COMMENT: SOMOZA, WHO PLANS TO VISIT THE UNITED STATES LATER THIS MONTH, APPEARED TO BE IN HIGH SPIRITS AND RELAXED. HIS PHYSICAL APPEARANCE AND ARTICULATION WERE BETTER THAN ON OTHER OCCASIONS DURING THE PAST THREE MONTHS. WHILE THE AMB WAS PRESENT, SOMOZA ACCEPTED A BUSINESS CALL, SUGGESTING THAT HE HAS RESUMED A MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN HIS PERSONAL BUSINESS EMPIRE. PRIOR TO THE CHAMORRO ASSASSINATION, AMB HAD BEEN ABLE TO NOTICE SOMOZA'S VERY ACTIVE PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT IN HIS PERSONAL BUSINESSES. SOMOZA INDICATED A FEELING OF INCREASED CONTROL OVER EVENTS. ON THE ONE HAND, HE CONTINUES TO INSIST THAT HE WILL RETIRE IN 1981, DENIGRATING THE POLITICAL POWER OF THE OPPOSITION, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME CALLING FOR PUBLIC USG SUPPORT OF THE GON, AND ACKNOWLEDGING DIALOG AS BEING THE ONLY VIABLE ALTERNATIVE FOR POST-SOMOZA NICARAGUA. AN INTERESTING POINT IS HIS APPARENT UNWILLINGNESS TO DIVULGE THE MANNER IN WHICH THE AMCITS WERE CONTRACTED BY THE GN. DAO HAS CONFIDENTIAL

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RECEIVED VERSIONS WHICH AGREE THAT AMCITS WERE ACQUAINTED WITH MAJ. ANASTACIO "TACHITO" SOMOZA WHILE THE LATTER WAS AT FT. BRAGG. END COMMENT.
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